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RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
OF WELLS

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31 DECEMBER, 1953

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Wells, Somerset.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ended December 31st, 1953.

GENERAL STATISTICS

Area, 57,175 Acres.

Population as supplied by the Registrar General 10,180.

Number of inhabited houses on the Rate Books, 2,852.

Rateable Value : £44,757.

Sum represented by a Penny Rate : £186 9s. 9d. (at March, 1953).

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

GEOLOGY.—Dolomitic Conglomerate at Chewton Mendip and Westbury-sub-Mendip ; Mountain Limestone at Priddy ; Red Marl at Dinder, North Wootton and Rodney Stoke ; Red Marl and River Gravel at Wookey ; Lower Lias at West Pennard, Baltonsborough and Walton ; Alluvium and Peat at Glastonbury Moor, Meare and Godney.

OCCUPATION.—Chiefly Agricultural ; Cheese and Cider Making ; Dairy Farming ; Paper Factories at Wookey and Wookey Hole ; Stone Quarrying in various parts of the District. Some of the people at Butleigh and Walton work at Shoe, Leather and Skin Factories at Street and Glastonbury. At Wookey Hole there is a factory manufacturing Electric Components, Fractional Motors and Television Equipment.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR

Births :

			Total	M.	F.	
Legitimate	...	...	160	85	75	
Illegitimate	...	...	6	4	2	
			166	89	77	Birth Rate 16.31.

Still Births : Total 4, Legitimate 4, Illegitimate Nil.

Deaths : Total 178, Male 90, Female 88, Death Rate 17.48.

Number of Women dying in or in consequence of Childbirth : 1.

Deaths of Infants under one year of age : Total 3, Legitimate 3, Illegitimate Nil.

Death Rate of Infants : All Infants per 1,000 live births, 18.07.
 Premature birth and debility accounted for : Nil ; Bronchitis 4.
 Deaths from Cancer (all ages), 19.
 Deaths from Measles (all ages), Nil.
 Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages), 1.
 Deaths from Pneumonia (all ages), 10.
 Deaths from Cerebro-Spinal Fever (all ages), Nil.
 Deaths from Diphtheria (all ages), Nil.
 Deaths from Influenza (all ages), Nil.
 Deaths from Acute Poliomyelitis, Nil.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR

Disease				Total Cases Notified	Admitted to Hospital	Deaths
Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	8	Nil	Nil
Diphtheria	...	...	...	Nil	Nil	Nil
Measles	...	...	...	81	Nil	Nil
Puerperal pyrexia	...	...	...	2	Nil	Nil
Cerebro-spinal-meningitis	...	...	...	1	Nil	Nil
Pneumonia	...	...	...	Nil	Nil	Nil
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	36	Nil	Nil
Enteric Fever	...	...	...	Nil	Nil	Nil
Dysentery	...	...	...	Nil	Nil	Nil
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	...	...	...	Nil	Nil	Nil
Acute Poliomyelitis	...	...	...	1	1	Nil

TUBERCULOSIS

New Cases and Mortality during the year :

Age Periods.	NEW CASES				DEATHS			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
5—10	1							
10—15	2	1		1				
15—20	1	1						
20—25								
25—30	2							
30—35	1							
35—40		1			1			
40—45	2							
45—50	3							
50—55	5							
55—60	3	1						
60—70	4				2			
70—80	3							

Public Officers of the District :

Medical Officer of Health (part-time): Dr. T. R. G. Melrose, F.R.C.S. (Ed.).

Chief Sanitary Inspector (whole time) : Stanley Merton Payne, Cert., S.I.B., M.S.I.A., Diploma of the Institute of Hygiene ; R.S.I. Certificate as Inspector of Meat and other Foods ; R.S.I. Certificate in Sanitary Science as applied to Buildings and Public Works. Resigned 30th June, 1953.

Additional Sanitary Inspector (whole time) : S. Harkness, Cert., S.I.B., M.S.I.A., Royal Sanitary Institute Certificate as Inspector of Meat and other Foods.. Food Hygiene Certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute. Promoted Chief Sanitary Inspector 1st July, 1953.

Water Engineer and Surveyor (whole time): Ivor Roberts Morgan, B.Sc. (Hons.), A.M.I.Mun.E., A.M.I.C.E.

Committees concerned with matters of Public Health : Public Health Committee ; Housing Committee.

CAUSES OF SICKNESS. There were no special causes of sickness.

PROFESSIONAL NURSING. District Nurses under Local Associations and Health Visitors, appointed by the County Council; the latter keep us informed as to the existence and removal of Tuberculosis Cases and other matters effecting the health of the district.

CLINICS. There is an Infant Welfare Centre in Wells, which is used by people residing in the Rural Area. School and Tuberculosis Clinics are provided by the County Council.

MIDWIVES. The lists are kept by the County Medical Officer of Health to whom they report all births, and any abnormal circumstances which might arise therefrom.

HOSPITALS. The Hospitals specialising in treatment and nursing of patients suffering from tuberculosis are now controlled by the various Hospital Boards which came into being when the National Health Service was inaugurated.

The Wells Cottage Hospital has wards for a limited number of maternity cases. This Hospital also has accommodation for children requiring tonsilectomy and treatment for other minor complaints.

SCARLET FEVER, DIPHTHERIA, Etc. Any infectious cases are now moved to the Ham Green Hospital, at Bristol.

No institution for un-married mothers, illegitimate children and homeless children exists in the District. Cases arising in each respective group mentioned requiring assistance are the primary concern of the Somerset County Council.

Removals of infectious cases to Hospital are now arranged from the Ham Green Hospital, in Bristol, on notification from the attending Doctor or the Public Health Department.

Attendance is made weekly by the County Tuberculosis Officer at Glastonbury and a considerable number of patients from the Rural Area attend here. The homes of notified cases are visited by the Sanitary Inspector and myself as well as by the County Health Visitors.

In the cases of Diphtheria and Cerebro-Spinal-Meningitis use is made of the County Bacteriological Laboratory, and Anti-Toxin is supplied by the District Council, when applied for by the Medical men practising in the District.

DISINFECTION. After infectious disease this is carried out by the Sanitary Inspector with the use of spraying apparatus on the lines recommended by the County Medical Officer of Health. All disinfectants are supplied free by the Council.

LABORATORY WORK. The County Council have a laboratory at Taunton where samples are examined both bacteriologically and chemically and also for tubercule bacilli. In addition the Public Health Laboratory Service have a laboratory at Taunton dealing with water samples, ice cream, etc.

ERADICATION OF BED BUGS. There have been no complaints and inspections during the year have revealed no bed bugs.

VENEREAL DISEASE. From the available evidence it would appear that the area is remarkably free from this disease.

SEWERAGE

The Wookey village scheme was completed during 1952.

Other village schemes have been prepared or are in course of preparation, and it is to be hoped that these can be constructed before further housing development takes place.

WATER SUPPLY

Work on the Comprehensive Water Scheme continued during the year. The construction of a permanent pumphouse was commenced at Priddy in March, 1953, the work is still proceeding and it is intended to instal chlorinating apparatus. Work on a pilot reservoir situated near Broadmead Quarry, Westbury-sub-Mendip was commenced about the same time and has not yet been completed.

Efforts are being made to supplement the water resources of the district and negotiations have continued during the year. It will be appreciated that supplementary water to the Priddy supply is necessary in order to meet the future needs of Wells City and Glastonbury Borough.

Baltonsborough. Each inhabited house has a supply laid on. The water is supplied in bulk from the Shepton Mallet R.D.C. A reservoir of 25,000 gals. capacity is situate on Windmill Hill with a top water level of O.D. + 190.

The delivery of water during the summer months is still very restricted and to meet the deficiencies the Council have provided a pump and chlorinating plant to extract water from the river. This water is pumped up to the reservoir and tests have proved that the quality is satisfactory. Water is also brought to this village by a link main from West Pennard—this meets most of the shortages in the lower parts of the village, but during peak draw off periods pressure is bad—this is due to the low head (O.D. + 159 and the length of small bore link main).

BUTLEIGH.

About 42 of the 168 houses have a water supply laid on from the Estate Supply. About 30 rely on standpipes and the remainder on private wells. The Estate Supply is derived from surface springs and storage of 500,000 gallons or more is provided in a series of reservoirs. The quality of the water is usually good, but there have in the past been various occasions on which pollution has occurred. Sampling of individual springs was carried out some few years ago and the water from the bad springs was cut off. The supply as it exists is far from sufficient for the needs, and during dry periods great conservation has to be practised. The Bridgwater, Minehead and Butleigh Group Hospital Management Committee control a hospital situated in this village. The water supply is derived from a private borehole but unfortunately the water varies in quality, consequently much supervision has been necessary in the past. The Management Committee finally decided to instal filtering and chlorinating apparatus and as a consequence there has been a marked improvement in the quality of the water.

CHEWTON MENDIP.

Approximately 91 out of 174 properties are supplied from the the Estate Supply or from Shepton Mallet. Of the remainder 44 have supplies available within 100 yards. The other properties are generally outlying and have to rely on wells or rainwater tanks. The Waldegrave Estate Company's private water supply is dependent on surface springs and a borehole. In the past this supply has been subject to intermittent pollution but the Estate Company have installed chlorinating apparatus at Stoney Path Reservoir and Butterwells. The water has therefore been considerably improved in quality.

OUT ST. CUTHBERT.

East and West Horrington.

A spring supply piped to a 10,000 gallon reservoir at 656 O.D. provides water for these two villages. The water is of good quality and all needs have been met up to the present. Some 59 out of 116 houses have a piped supply and the remainder have standpipes available within reasonable distance.

Coxley

Approximately 102 houses out of 185 are now supplied with water on tap. Some of this is from the Council's main and some from private mains (mainly the Ecclesiastical Commissioners). Most of the remaining houses are being connected up as quickly as possible by the Council's plumbers.

Burcott.

71 houses either without water or relying on their own wells.

Easton.

The village now has a main water supply—33 of the 73 houses are connected to the Council's mains and 24 rely on standpipes. The public wells which served the village for so many years are infrequently used and no doubt in course of time the pumps will be removed.

Wookey Hole, Elm Close and Haybridge.

These groups of houses are supplied by Wells City who are the Statutory Water Undertakers. Most houses have piped supplies of good quality water in adequate supply.

Dulcote.

Some 44 houses of which 31 have a piped supply derived from a small private water system installed many years ago. There are no complaints of shortage and the cottages without piped supplies have water available within easy reach.

Chilcote, Worminster, Milton and Walcombe.

These small groups of houses have piped supplies from various sources. Their needs appear to have been met, and they do not form part of the Regional Scheme.

DINDER.

39 out of 61 houses have piped supplies from the Estate Supply. This water is derived from springs which rise near Masbury Ring. The remainder of the houses are not within reach of the mains and have to rely on wells, etc., for their water. The Estate Water is of good quality and appears to be sufficient for present requirements.

GODNEY.

47 out of 73 houses have piped supplies from the Street U.D.C. main which runs through the village. The supply is of good quality and there is no shortage at any time. The remainder of the houses have to rely on private supply as they are not in compact groups or within easy reach of the trunk main.

Meare.

Water mains having been laid to the greater part of this parish has made it possible for 151 of the 269 houses to have a piped supply and approximately 30 others are served by standpipe.

The village is now supplied with water under normal pressure as the Meare water tower which rises some 83 feet above the ground and has a capacity of 125,000 gallons is in use.

NORTH WOOTTON.

64 out of 78 houses have piped water of good quality and unlimited quantity. The remainder of the houses are not within easy reach of the mains but in at least three of these cases they are likely to lay on water at an early date. The water is derived from two boreholes, each fitted with an electric pump. There is a reservoir of 30,000 gallons capacity at 155 O.D. One electric pump is controlled by float switch and provides water for the Parish—the other pump is manually controlled and delivers water into the chlorinating plant of the Glastonbury Corporation which is within 100 yards of our plant. The water so delivered is taken back by this Council at West Pennard for use in that Parish.

PRIDDY.

51 of the 96 houses have piped supplies. The majority of this number are supplied from the Council's mains but there are still a few obtaining water from an agricultural system installed by the

Church Commissioners. The District Council purchase water in bulk at some of the remote parts of the village and distribute to the nearby cottages.

A small part of the population haul water from the Council's supply at Priddy Green. This water is of excellent quality and of such sufficiency that it forms the major source of the Council's Regional Water Supply Scheme.

The District Council proposes to acquire the existing Church Commissioners' Reservoir situated on Nine Barrows Hill, in order to provide water storage for the needs of the village.

RODNEY STOKE

There are 227 houses in this Parish. 41 are supplied by Street U.D.C. under their Water Act which empowers them to supply as many as can be fed by gravity from their trunk main; and 95 other houses are supplied from this Council's new main.

SHARPHAM.

8 houses out of 28 have piped supplies. The remainder are not within easy reach of the main and have to haul water from one of two standpipes which have been provided. The source of the water is the Street U.D.C. main. Wells R.D.C. purchase in bulk. Quality and quantity satisfactory.

WALTON.

There are 154 houses, and all except the outlying ones now have water on tap. Total connected is 124. The source of the water is again the Street U.D.C. main.

WESTBURY.

49 out of 173 houses have piped supplies—these are of a private nature and mainly from an agricultural scheme installed by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners some years ago. A further 86 houses now have piped water supplies from the Council's mains.

WEST PENNARD.

172 out of 195 houses have piped supplies. The remainder have either a standpipe within easy reach or have private supplies. There is a 30,000 gallon reservoir at Sticklynch, and water is purchased in bulk from the Glastonbury Corporation. When shortages were encountered it became necessary to provide Glastonbury Corporation with water at North Wootton (see note above) and during the dry season it is now possible to pump into the main at North Wootton as much water as is required to be extracted at West Pennard. The arrangement is very satisfactory to both Councils.

WOOKEY.

A rather scattered Parish comprising Wookey, Yarley, Henton and Bleadney. The Ecclesiastical Parish of Wookey itself now has water mains available to most houses. The complete Civil Parish comprises 278 houses of which 116 now have piped water.

THE MENDIP HOSPITAL.

This large Institution which houses well over 1,000 persons has its own water supply. The main source is two boreholes situate between Bristol Road and Watchet's Spring which provides the water for East and West Horrington. These boreholes are in the old red sandstone formation, and yield insufficient water for the very large demands of such an institution and the farms run in connection therewith.

The Hospital is within the statutory supply area of the City of Wells and during 1952 a main was laid from Bath Road, Wells, to Knapp Hill Farm, which is owned by the Hospital Board. A pump is installed at this farm and the water raised to the Hospital Reservoir. After a certain quantity of water is used the pump referred to is automatically started and the reservoir re-filled.

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S REPORT

The following is a summary of the inspections made during the year :—

Infectious dwellings: Occupiers served with notice as to isolation of patients and disinfection	11
Disinfectants supplied by the Council	19
Dwellings and clothing disinfected as directed by the Medical Officer of Health	11
Nuisances arising from foul and choked drains, foul accumulations, etc.	55
Samples of drinking water sent to the County Laboratory for chemical analysis	11
Samples of drinking water sent to the Public Health Laboratory for bacteriological examination	49
Premises licensed under the Petroleum Acts for the storage of petrol	49
Premises licensed under the Petroleum Acts for the storage of carbide of calcium	Nil
Visits re water supplies	109
Bakehouses (3), Slaughterhouses (6), inspected	15
Public Schools inspected	14
Visits to dairies	48
Visits re food inspection	42
Other inspections under Housing Acts	287
Visits re rats	432
Visits re sewage disposal scheme	85
Visits re refuse collection	41
Inspections of Ice Cream premises	26

REFUSE COLLECTION.

Unburnable household refuse is collected monthly. The Council use their own vehicle (Bedford Eagle) for this work.

FACTORIES ACT, 1937

1.—**INSPECTIONS** for purpose of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors).

Premises (1)	Number on Register (2)	Number of		
		Inspections (3)	Written notices (4)	Occupiers prosecuted (5)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by local Authorities	21	24	Nil	Nil
(ii) Factories not included in (i) to which Section 7 applies (a) Subject to the Local Authorities (Transfer of Enforcement) Order, 1938				
(b) Others	31	36	Nil	Nil
(iii) Other Premises under the Act (excluding out-workers' premises)				
TOTAL	52	70	Nil	Nil

DEFECTS (i.e. want of Cleanliness) were found in 6 cases, and inadequate sanitary accommodation in 1 case. These were remedied on informal action.

OUTWORKERS. There are 37 outworkers in the district (all wearing apparel).

ICE CREAM

No premises are licensed for the manufacture of ice cream, but 32 shops are registered for the sale of this product.

SLAUGHTERHOUSES

Under the Livestock (Restrictions of Slaughtering) Order 1940, all the slaughterhouses in the Rural Area were automatically closed on 12th January, 1940, and a further Order made by the Minister of Food in 1947 continued the prohibition of the use of such premises. With the exception of farmers' pigs (for their own consumption) and a few casualties, no slaughtering has taken place at any of the slaughterhouses. Regular inspection has therefore to a great extent been unnecessary.

Only a small quantity of meat was condemned during the year.

FOOD INSPECTION.

Inspection of food at shops and stores is carried out regularly and small quantities have been condemned as found necessary. Model bye laws with regard to the sale of food were adopted by the Council on August 28th, 1950.

MILK AND DAIRIES ORDERS.

On October 1st, 1949, the control of milk producing premises (with the exception of water supplies and drainage) passed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Local control generally speaking now only applies to the Retailing of Milk—other than Producer-Retailers.

The number of Purveyors of Milk (other than Producer-Retailers) is 12.

There are 4 Bottling licences permitting the bottling of T.T. Milk, one for Pasteurized Milk and another for Pasteurized T.T. Milk.

3 Supplementary T.T. licences have been issued to retailers whose dairies are outside the area and also 2 supplementary licences to permit the sale of Pasteurized Milk.

HOUSING

There were 182 applicants for Council Houses remaining on the lists at the end of 1953.

2 condemned houses continued, under licence, to be used for human habitation.

There are about 385 unfit houses in the district at present. In the interests of national economy all houses are needed except the worst and it is likely that measures will be introduced to encourage owners in maintaining property in a proper manner. Inevitably some of the 385 houses referred to will be condemned but it is hoped that owners of a great many will carry out works of repair and re-conditioning and thus considerably reduce the number lost to the district.

The housing accommodation of 23 families is for one reason or another considered unsatisfactory and two others occupy premises which are overcrowded.

It is difficult to estimate the number of new houses which are still required but when one considers that controls on building are becoming less severe and there is also evidence that steps are being taken to assist private enterprise both in the building of new houses and the re-conditioning of the old, the outlook is rather better than it was some years ago. Taking all these facts into consideration a fair estimate of new houses still necessary would probably be in excess of two hundred.

During the year, 25 new houses have been completed by the Council and 16 by private enterprise. A further 18 were under construction at the end of December, 1953, 5 by the Council and 13 by private enterprise.

I have the honour to be, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

T. R. G. MELROSE,

Medical Officer of Health.

